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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to find solution for wayward sea turtles

July 30, 2024 – Flagler County has received reports that some wayward sea turtles have been able to crawl up onto the top of the new dunes in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers construction project area and there is worry that they may wander onto State Road A1A. Efforts are under way to provide a solution.

“We are working closely with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service right now to take preventative measures for turtles that may crawl up onto the new dune so they don’t go onto the road,” said Coastal Engineering Administrator Ansley Wren-Key. “The design of the dune slope was approved by FWC and was supposed to be too steep for the turtles to climb up, but they are apparently able to do so.”

Flagler County met with these two wildlife agencies and the Army Corps to discuss additional barriers that can be used to protect the sea turtles from this hazard and reached agreement for an effective solution. The contract will be modified to accelerate the permanent sand fencing. If this cannot be done in a timely manner, temporary silt fencing can be installed and later removed and replaced with permanent sand fencing.

Additionally, dimensions for the permanent sand fencing will be modified such that the slats of the fence will be 3 feet above ground and embedded 10-12 inches below ground, as this would satisfy requirements for both sea turtles and gopher tortoises. It is the goal to have the silt fence mimic the modified design of the sand fence in the interim until the permanent sand fencing is installed.

“Once the wide beach is built, these sea turtles will have more habitat to lay their eggs and nest,” Wren-Key said. “On other nourished beaches in Florida, statistics show that nesting activity increases – and the mortality rate decreases – as more nesting areas are provided and the nests are not washed out with high tides and storms, which can be a hazard for nests on narrow beaches.”

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